THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) During last 2 years 11 representations had been received for opening of new divisional offices on Western Railway at Ahmedabad and one for Udaipur. Keeping the various factors into consideration, the Government has decided to sert up 8 new divisions at Agra, Ahmedabad, Ranchi, Raipur, Rangiya, Pune, Guntur and Singrauli.

(c) New divisions are set up keeping in view factors like size, workload and accessibility, traffic patterns and other operating/administrative requirements etc. consistent with the needs of economy and efficiency.

[Translation]

New Telephone Exchanges

4047. SHRI JAYSINH CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any demand/scheme/proposal for opening Telephone Exchanges in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise and location-wise; and

(c) the steps taken so far or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The commissioning programme for 1997-98 has not yet been finalised. However, as per policy of the Department, a new exchange is planned at a place when the registered demand reaches 10 or more.

[English]

Apna Net

4048. SHRI VIJAY PATEL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether recently launched Apna Net by a group of post graduate students has gained astonishing popularity;

(b) if so, whether the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited has blocked the site of Apna Net;

(c) whether it is tantamount to denial of consumers rights; and

(d) if so, the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (c) Apna Net is a registered Website with Internic, USA connected to a leased line (128 kilobits/sec) of VSNL's Gateway Internet Acess Service. No data is available to judge its popularity. Access to Apna Net has been temporarily Disabled by Vadish Sanchar Nigam Ltd. due to repeated violation of agreement between VSNL and subscriber (Apna Net).

(d) Does not arise in view of (a) to (c) above.

First Class Privilege Pass

4049. SHRI PRADIP BHATTACHARYA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the First Class Privilege Pass issued in favour of railway employees are not allowed to travel in Rajdhani Express and Shatabdi Express in Chair Car and Three Tier A/C sleeper class;

(b) if so, the reasons and justification thereof;

(c) whether the Government have even examined the Financial and Social aspects of denying First Class privilege pass holders to travel in Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) First Class Holders are allowed to travel in III AC in Rajdhani Expresses and Chair Car in Shatabdi Express trains, subject to certain restriction on the number of berths/ seats to be booked against one privilege pass.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Communication System

4050. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether due to cyclone and rains in Andhra Pradesh during 1996, the major communication systems damaged in almost every part of State;

(b) if so, the details of loss suffered on account of this;

(c) whether all the communication systems have since been repaired; and

(d) if so, the total expenditure involved therein?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) No, Sir. Due to cyclone and rains during 1996, the communication systems were affected only in East Godavari, West Godavari, Anantpur, Cuddapah, Nellore and Prakasham District of Andhra Pradesh.

(b) The Revenue loss suffered on account of this is estimated to be about Rs. 1.15 crores.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The total expenditure involved is about Rs. 3,85,63,665/-.